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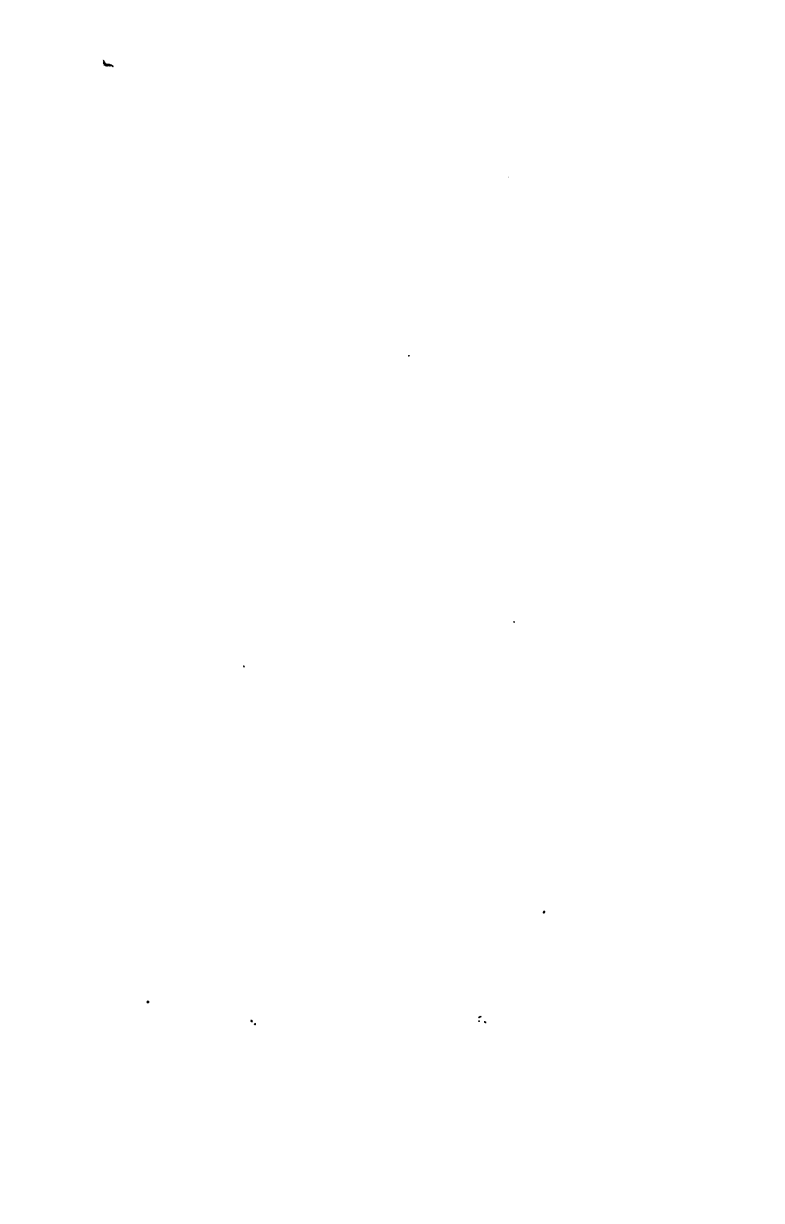
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AN ADDRESS
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YOUNG PERSONS
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CONFIRMATION.

BY THE
REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, M.A.
RECTOR OF HINTON MARTELL, DORSET.

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YOU have now “avouched”—or publicly professed—“the Lord to be your God.”¹ You have entered the fight against all the Lord’s enemies and the enemies of your soul; you have engaged to renounce and resist them; and to “walk in all the commandments of God.”

In your Baptism, a believing hope was expressed, “that you would not be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his Banner against Sin, the World, and the Devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto your life’s end.”² You have repeatedly laid claim to this character in your Catechism; and at length you have come forward to declare in the face of the Church, and in the teeth of the World, that the cross of Christ is your boast and glory; that you disown all other Masters; and desire to live only in the service and to the praise of your Redeemer.

¹ Deut. xxvi. 17.

² Bapt. Service.

Let me however solemnly remind you, that this declaration is *for ever*.¹ It is an engagement, or rather the open profession of a former engagement, made between God and yourself; and every future moment of your life is to be a part of the fulfilment of it. This at least is certain, that every moment must, and will be, either the fulfilment, or the breach of it. You are every moment assaulted by some of the enemies of your soul; every moment either the faith you professed is encouraging you to resist them; or, in the neglect of this faith, you are tamely yielding to them. Every moment some part of the will and commands of God is to be done, or submitted to: and every moment you are either “constrained by the love of Christ” to do or to suffer that will; or you are shrinking from it, and so “denying the Lord that bought you.”

How clear is it—not only from reason and Scripture, but from the language of our own Church, that the vow you have taken upon yourselves, binds you for ever to the love and service of God! Your renouncing of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, is spoken of as a determination *never* “to follow, nor be led by them,” “to *crucify* the old man, and *utterly abolish* the whole body of sin,” *continually* to mortify *all*

¹ See Jer. L. 5.

your evil and corrupt affections. The faith you have professed is "*constantly* to believe in God;" and the obedience you have promised is "to walk in God's will and commandments *unto your life's end.*"¹

Confirmation, therefore, seriously undertaken, may be with you the first step of your heavenly journey; and the whole journey is only a repetition of such steps, one every moment of your life till you come to the end. You have thrown down your challenge to the enemies of God; and your after life is the fight that follows that challenge. For you have drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard; and you can never quit the field, while life lasts, without giving up the hopes, and losing the character, of a Christian.

Now then the fight begins. At Baptism you were enlisted; at Confirmation you entered the field; and you are henceforth upon actual service, ready, God helping you, to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."²

I shall endeavour, under God's blessing, to show what you will want in beginning this warfare: and then give you some directions for holding on in it.

I. In entering upon the warfare.

¹ Bapt. Service and Catechism. ² 2 Tim. ii. 3.

1. Let us attend to what the Scripture says of the Spirit of the Gospel.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”¹ “We walk by faith, not by sight.”² “As he is, so are we in this world.”³ “Our conversation is in heaven.”⁴ “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”⁵ “For me to live is Christ.”⁶ These are the principles of our Christian profession. They flow from a living faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour. Under their blessed influence we “take unto us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.”⁷

2. Let us count the cost of this warfare.

“Because we are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”⁸ Because we are “called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”⁹ “As then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.”¹⁰ “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the

¹ John, xvii. 14.

² 2 Cor. v. 7.

³ 1 John, iv. 17.

⁴ Philip. iii. 20.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

⁶ Philip. i. 21.

⁷ Eph. vi. 13.

⁸ John, xv. 19.

⁹ 1 John, iii. 1.

¹⁰ Gal. iv. 29.

body, ye shall live.”¹ “Your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.”² “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.”³ “He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”⁴

The Scripture speaks of this warfare in the same way in which it appears in the Baptismal vow. I mean in connexion with faith: “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,”⁵—faith, which “believes the love which God has to you;” faith, which attaches, and devotes the believer to the Lord Jesus; and which draws continual supplies of grace from him, to “fight this good fight,” even unto the end. It was “by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the

¹ Rom. viii. 13.

² 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

³ Matt. x. 37.

⁴ Ibid. 39.

⁵ 1 John, v. 4.

recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."¹ By faith Abraham² was enabled to give up the dearest comforts of life, and to follow at the command of God, "not knowing whither he went." And "we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses," who look down upon us from Heaven; and with one voice encourage us to "run the" same "race set before us, looking unto" the same Saviour—"Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."³

And now let me ask—What has your own experience taught you respecting the scriptural account of this matter? I mean—your experience during the short time since you have put on the "armour of God," and entered by profession into the field of battle? Remember what has been already noticed—there is not a moment since your Confirmation, that your enemies have not been fighting against you. The *enemy of souls* has been endeavouring to draw you back from strict fidelity to God; tempting you to put a false meaning upon your vow, whenever you have been called upon to perform it; aggravating the difficulties and dangers of a life of self-denial; setting forth the charms of worldly objects, and

¹ Heb. xi. 24-27.

² Ibid. 8.

³ Ibid. xii. 2.

the pleasures of careless ease. *The world too* has been spreading itself before your sight, while the Devil was commending it to your heart; or, if you have stood a little firm against its pleasures, it has perhaps assailed you with scorn and mockery; at least with the coolness and neglect of those, from whom you had expected kindness, and from whom, till now, you have received it. But above all—*the flesh*. The Devil may not, the world cannot, always tempt. But no waking moment can be free from the influence of “the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, which are only evil continually.”¹ Even where the Spirit dwells in the heart, “the flesh will always be lusting against it.”² While the Spirit is continually impressing your minds with the love, the majesty, the holiness, the grace, the tenderness, of God in the gift of his Son, is not self always struggling for a little less constant watchfulness, a little rest to the flesh, a little less lively sense of the character and claims of God? Is not the heart sometimes ready to make even a desperate effort, and to say—‘*I must be indulged; I will have my own way?*’

I do not ask, whether in this struggle you have always *conquered*? But I ask, and I wish you honestly to ask yourselves, have you always

¹ Gen. vi. 5.

² Gal. v. 17.

fought? I doubt not but you have met with many humbling proofs of the deceitfulness of your hearts. You have found that no dependence is to be placed on frames of mind, and impressions. You perhaps could not have thought, that the desire, the delight, with which at Confirmation you seemed to devote yourselves to Him who died for you, could so soon have left your hearts cold and empty, as you have often felt them to be, since this solemn season of your dedication to God.

Now this is permitted, to show you what you are; to prevent you from placing reliance on any thing whatever, but Christ. It is to show you how weak you are, and where your strength lies; to stir you up to prayer, that God would fulfil his promises to you; that you may be enabled to say, not merely because you read it in the Scriptures, but because you can set your seal to it in your own case—"In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."¹ How blessed is the distinction between the believer, who has recourse by faith to this strength, and those who depend upon their own!—"The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: *they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they*

¹ Isa. xlv. 24.

shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."¹

Your experience in this respect will show you more clearly the meaning of that important text often quoted—"When I am weak, then am I strong."² Therefore let none of these things discourage you. Your vow, if you made it in dependence upon the grace of Christ, gave you a hold on Almighty strength. And if you sincerely desire to "hold fast the profession of your faith," remember whom "you have believed," and let nothing persuade you to doubt "that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him against that day."³ "Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world."⁴

You will perhaps ask—what are those exertions and endeavours of faith, by which we are to maintain this habitual warfare against our enemies, and this persevering struggle to fulfil the will of God?

II. For this purpose I would offer the following directions.

1. Never lose sight of the great object of faith.

Faith is dependence. Its strength consists not in any peculiar power of its own, but is derived

¹ Isa. xl. 30, 31.

³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

² 2 Cor. xii. 10.

⁴ 1 John, iv. 4.

wholly from its object—Jesus Christ. Faith acts according to *all* the different circumstances of the believer, by means of the impressions, motives, and encouragements, which are drawn from a view of the Saviour. “They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.”¹ “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”² “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”³ “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”⁴ “I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.”⁵

Now let these texts set before you the completeness of Christ for all the wants of your soul—for all the purposes of God’s mercy and grace in your salvation. *As to your ground of acceptance therefore*—be sure that it rests simply upon what Christ has done for you. If by faith you have an interest in him, “you are complete in him!”⁶ and therefore you need nothing in yourselves—no frames and feelings—no prayers, duties, or repentance—to recommend you to God. Under all circumstances of trial, weakness, difficulty, and temptations, you must go on to the

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 5.

² Isa. xlv. 22.

³ Gal. ii. 20.

⁴ John, xv. 4.

⁵ Philip. iv. 13.

⁶ Col. ii. 10.

end, "beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;"¹ pleading his blood; which pleads for you with everlasting merit, thus making him and his work "all your salvation."

And so as to your sanctification—"All your springs are in him."² He "is made unto you Sanctification," as well as "Righteousness." You must not look for your sanctification to arise from any train of feelings or duties. It shows itself indeed in all the practical exercises of our high profession; but it flows immediately from Christ. Union with him is your life; and until you have found life in him, all your works are "dead works;" hateful to God, and every way unfit for his service.

Then as for your strength—it is "his strength" in you "made perfect in weakness." And here indeed is all the comfort you want. Weak as you are, and difficult as is your work, you look to one who when you are "oppressed," has engaged to "undertake for you:"³ in whom "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," on purpose that "of his fulness you might receive grace for grace."⁴ He knows the grace you want, and he has promised that his "grace shall be sufficient for you."⁵ He has laid

¹ John, i. 29. ² Ps. lxxxvii. 7. ³ Isa. xxxviii. 14.

⁴ Col. i. 19. John, i. 16. ⁵ 2 Cor. xii.

by your portion for every day, and keeps it for you till the moment when it is required. He undertook for you on the cross, when he "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."¹ He undertakes for you now, when he "appears in the presence of God for you," and receives on your behalf the gifts you stand in need of.²—Thus on every account you see the importance of never losing sight of this glorious object of your faith. Now, in order that you may keep him always in view, I would next say—

2. Search the Scriptures daily.

The grand reason for this search is—that "they testify of him."³ Faith there finds what she is in search of—the history of the life, death, and doctrine of "God manifest in the flesh;" and the claims, encouragements, and supports, which the Spirit of God, speaking of the salvation of Christ, furnishes to our souls. The principal of these are summed up in the Creed, which is therefore called "the Articles of the Christian Faith." The Creed will help you in searching the Scriptures, because it is a short account of all he did and suffered, and of what he is doing now for your salvation.

What can be more solemn, and yet more en-

¹ *1 Pet. ii. 24.* ² *Heb. ix. 24.* *Ps. lxxviii. 18.*

³ *John, v. 39.*

couraging, than such passages of Scripture as these? "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."¹ "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."² "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins."³ "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."⁴ "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive."⁵ "If we confess our

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Philip. iii. 10. "Who was crucified, dead and buried." (Creed.)

² Rom. iv. 25. "The third day he rose again from the dead." (Creed.)

³ Col. iii. 1. 1 John, ii. 1, 2. "He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." (Creed.)

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 10. "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." (Creed.)

⁵ John, xiv. 15-17. "I believe in the Holy Ghost." (Creed.)

sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹
 “Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee a crown of life.”²

Let no day pass without attentively reading such passages as those. Dwell on them, and wait in hope for that impression on your heart, which a spiritual understanding of the character and offices of the Lord Jesus will give you. Remember, everything that you get of Christ is pure gold. Every fresh view of his glory, every new thought of his love, is worth all the treasures of the world to you. Come then to the cross, and abide there. See what he has done there; and what it was done for, and what it has delivered us from; and what tempers, and what conduct it was intended to produce in us. And then let faith lift up her eyes, and behold Jesus sitting, and pleading at the right hand of God, and preparing a place of eternal blessedness for them that love him.

But it is not enough that we understand what we read. It is written, “They shall be all taught of God.”³ He only can teach the heart, and

¹ 1 John, i. 9. “The forgiveness of sins.” (Creed.)

² Rev. ii. 10. “And the life everlasting.” (Creed.)

³ John, vi. 45, with Isa. liv. 13.

therefore he only can "teach us to profit." While we read the Scriptures,—

3. *We must also add frequent and earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit.*

We see how David prayed for Divine teaching, that he might profit by the word, as well as understand it. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me." "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end." "I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me." "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."¹

You must not expect to derive any benefit from the word of God, but by the Spirit of God. You must therefore pray for yourselves, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians—that God "would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and

¹ Ps. cxix. 18, 19, 32, 33, 102; cxliii. 10.

what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”¹ Thus you will be led to consider spiritual things, and spiritual truths, not merely as being real, but more than that—of unspeakable importance and value; you will feel the reproofs of the Scriptures, take heed to their directions, lean on their support, and revive by their consolations: you will not only hear of Christ as a Saviour, but will constantly flee to him as *your* Saviour. While he invites like the parent bird,² so do you fly to him, as the helpless brood to the wings of their mother on every approach of danger—feeling your present, urgent distress—and humbly trusting in his protection.

As this becomes the habit of your soul, you will more and more enjoy that “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” which will strengthen you to maintain the Christian character and to carry on the Christian warfare to the end.

4. *Set the Saviour always before you as your pattern.* He “left us an example, that we should follow his steps.”³ Learn from him, what is very important, that when we renounce the world, we do not renounce lawful business and necessary

¹ Eph. i. 17–19.

² Matt. xxiii. 37.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

engagements in the world : nor the duties which we owe to our parents and relations. Follow him, who taught you the duties of children by being "subject to his parents ;"¹ who was fearless in the cause of God, while he "submitted to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Let the love of Christ be your motive, the example of Christ your pattern, and the strength and grace of Christ your dependence, in all the duties of relative and social life. Then your love to those who are already dear to you, will be more powerful, refined, and lasting ; then you will act towards them with affection and respect without selfishness. You will also be cheerful, and ready to maintain universal kindness, delighting in the happiness, and endeavouring to promote the comfort of all, and "especially of those who are of the household of faith." For, while you pay particular attention to your relative duties, you must be gentle and kind to all. "As you have opportunity," "in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."² "And be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."³

¹ *Luke, ii. 51.* ² *2 Tim. ii. 25.* ³ *1 Pet. iii. 15.*

Especially let our example speak; "that if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won, while they behold your" upright "conversation coupled with" godly "fear."¹

But more especially let the love and example of Christ influence your conduct and temper towards each other, and towards all who love "the truth as it is in Jesus." Lay aside all contention about little indifferent matters, and doubtful uncertain questions. Be not on the watch to discover who is right, and who is wrong, nor to make any person "an offender for a word."—"Receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."² A regard to this important rule may often show that both are right, when both were thinking each other wrong. Let this tenderness of Christ, therefore, be your daily pattern. Be kindly watchful for each other's comfort, ready to listen and help in each other's difficulties. Be upright, cheerful, sincere—"by love serving one another;"³ and yet so combining Christian love with faithfulness to your Master, that, while you preserve charity, you may make no sacrifice of truth.

Thus fighting in your Saviour's strength as the Captain of your salvation, against all his and

¹ *1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.*

² *Rom. xv. 7.*

³ *Gal. v. 13.*

your enemies, and “abstaining from those things which war against the soul,” you will, “by well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,”¹ and also become the Lord’s honoured instruments in leading those to Christ, who are yet strangers to his grace ; and in strengthening those who are already under its influence.

And now, if you not only “believe in the Lord Jesus in your heart,” but have also “with the mouth made confession unto salvation ;”² we invite you, after due consideration, prayer and instruction, to follow up your public confession by coming to the table of the Lord. There, “by showing forth the Lord’s death,”³ you will profess before the world and the Church, that you are not ashamed of his Cross, that you are ready to “go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach.”⁴ By taking upon yourselves the badge of his profession, you will show, that you honour him as your Master, remember him as your Friend, and trust in him as your Saviour. This is also a duty you owe to your fellow-christians, “with one mind,” and one profession, “striving together for the faith of the gospel.”⁵ We must therefore “stand in doubt of you,” if you wil-

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 11, 15.

² Rom. x. 9, 10.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 13.

⁵ Philip. i. 27.

fully draw back from this pledge of union with Christ and his people. It shows a neglect of the authority of your Divine Master—the power of unbelief—the fear of the cross—and a want of love to Christ and to his poor despised people. On the other hand, by attending upon this holy ordinance you will renew from time to time your Confirmation vow; the remembrance of your Saviour's love will more and more "constrain you;" and you will find the benefit of the strengthening and refreshing of your soul by "the body and blood of Christ."¹

Do you then desire to come to his table? In his name we affectionately bid you welcome, "Eat, O friends, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."² Here is "meat to eat, which the world knoweth not of." Your Saviour's "flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed."³ "Go in the strength of that meat"⁴ to your daily work, and your daily conflict, rejoicing in the Lord. Thus you will form a closer union with the people of God, who will rejoice to add you to their society, separated from the world, and journeying towards heaven; and who will be ever ready to "strengthen your weak hands and confirm your feeble knees"⁵ in the ways of God.

¹ *Catechism.*

² Song of Sol. v. 1.

³ *John*, vi. 55. ⁴ *1 Kings*, xix. 8. ⁵ *Isa.* xxxv. 3.

In conclusion, I would address a few words distinctly to different classes of young persons.

I. *There are some, who do not, I fear, see the engagement of Confirmation in its full extent, particularly with respect to the renouncing of the world.* Yet they regard the vow, as far as they allow it to extend, as of very solemn importance. Wherever there is this honest, and—as I would hope in many cases—Divine impression, let me suggest the Scriptural advice—“Hold fast that thou hast.” “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹ This knowledge will draw you out of the world without the persuasion of man ;² just as the merchantman gladly gave up his “goodly pearls,” when the “pearl of great price” was set before him.³ Remember the promises God has made to those who diligently improve what they already have—“Then shall you know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.” “Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.”⁴ And seek the fulfilment of these promises in the diligent use of the means of grace. “Be sober, and watch unto prayer.” “Search the Scriptures

¹ Rev. iii. 11. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

² See Gal. vi. 14 ; 1 John, v. 4, 5.

³ Comp. Matt. xiii. 45, 46 ; Philip. iii. 7, 8.

⁴ Hos. vi. 3. Matt. xxv. 29.

daily whether these things are so." "Take no commandments of men for doctrines," whether agreeing or disagreeing with your own feelings; "For one is your Master, even Christ." "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy."¹

II. *There are others who freely acknowledge that they never considered the engagement made at Confirmation, as laying them under any obligation to a new life, or to any change whatever. And there are others again, who plainly show they think this, though they do not say it.* I am persuaded that in your state of mind no blessing can have been found in Confirmation; nor do I know what benefit can be expected to follow it; except indeed, that, by the remembrance of your wilful act of solemn mockery, you may be pricked to the heart, and brought upon your knees in secret, in "the spirit of supplication to look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn."² Then indeed, in the first tear of contrition, in the first cry of the heart for mercy, you will find the seal of tender love, and gracious acceptance. And aggravated as your guilt will then appear to you, nothing will be able to stop the full tide of forgiveness from flowing into your

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 7. Acts, xvii. 11. Matt. xv. 9; xxiii. 8. Jam. iv. 12.

² Zech. xii. 10.

soul: for "though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."¹

III. *I would ask; Are any of you who have lately "subscribed with your hands unto the Lord," already tired of your choice?* Do you begin to think your vow less binding, less solemn, than it was at the time you made it? Does sin look more pleasant, and more inviting? Do the ways of God seem more strange and melancholy than they did? Have not you yet determined, whether you will renounce the world or Christ? A heart under the power of conviction is only half won—still kept in bondage—the world loved and struggling for its mastery. A heart under the power of faith has burst the chains of sin and the world for ever. I say to you therefore—Believe, and live. "Resist the devil, steadfast in the faith, and he will flee from you."² But in your own delusions? Oh! beware, lest Satan should get an advantage of you, from your being "ignorant of his devices."³ Be assured that sin is still as abominable, as you thought it to be, when you engaged to renounce it: the world is as deceitful and ruinous, and the lusts of the flesh as contrary to God, and as

¹ Isa. i. 18.

² 1 Pet. v. 9. Jam. iv. 7.

³ 2 Cor. ii. 11.

hurtful to your soul as ever. Fear then drawing back, worse than death ; and remember that looking back is next to drawing back, and "drawing, back" is the direct road "to perdition."¹ Pray that the Spirit may be poured upon you, as "floods upon the dry ground." Then you will "grow as the willows by the water-courses ;" you will "subscribe with your" heart as well as your "hand unto the Lord."² You will not, you cannot *then* repent of your choice. You will only desire that fresh ties may bind you and fresh motives constrain you. Your language will be — "Thou hast loosed my bonds ;"³ bind me, O my Saviour, with new bonds, that never shall be loosed ; suffer not my wayward heart to stray, even in thought, from thee and thy service ; "teach me thy way, O Lord ; I will walk in thy truth ; unite my heart to fear thy name."⁴

IV. *Most of you are young in years : and even those who are sincere, are many of you young in grace and knowledge.* You know but little yet of the difficulties or the comforts of the ways of God. All that perhaps you have yet felt is only a desire to serve God, a wish to lead a more serious life ; and you have offered a few prayers, that the Lord would teach you to give up your

¹ *Heb. x. 39.*

² *Ps. cxvi. 16.*

³ *Isa. xlv. 3-5.*

⁴ *Ib. lxxxvi. 11.*

hearts to him. You are still ignorant, inexperienced, and weak. But if you are really sincere, though you have much to learn, you have nothing to fear. Your God is one that "despiseth not the day of small things."¹ Your Saviour is he that "breaketh not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax." Like the good Shepherd, he takes especial care of "the lambs : gathering them in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom,"² feeding them with food convenient for them, and leading them as they are able to bear it.

If the prospect of difficulty is too much for the weakness of your faith, look to him who has enabled you to put your hand to the plough ; and he will enable you to keep it there without looking back. Remember—he hath said—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."³ Remember that the feeblest faith will give you a present interest in this and in every promise of his word. And what can you want beside to hold you up, and hold you on to the end ? It is the daily exercise of this faith, that will strengthen your resolutions, and impart spiritual life to your convictions ; while the want of it gives a fearful power to temptations, and leads you to faint in secret prayer, and at last utterly to fall. In such a service—with *such a Master* all is full of encouragement. The

¹ Zech. iv. 10. ² Isa. xlii. 3 ; xl. 11. ³ Heb. xiii. 5.

bands with which you have been “drawn,” and which are still cast around you, are “bands of love.”¹ Will you not try to have them fastened more firmly? What a subject of praise that the bonds of sin should be loosed, that you might be cheerfully, and for ever, the servants of God?”²

· Lastly—*I would say to all who will hear*—prove that you really did give your heart to God on the day of Confirmation, by giving it to him every day, yea, many times a day. And prove the sincerity of this daily dedication, by increasing fear of going back; by lowliness of mind, tenderness of conscience, separation from the spirit and temper of the world, and by resistance to temptation. Be watchful over your words, your tempers, your inclinations, and especially your besetting sins. We do not indeed expect from you the obedience of an angel; but we must see—the Church of God must see—nay, the world with all their blindness and unwillingness to be convinced, must see, that “you are new creatures, that old things are passed away, and that all things are become new.” Thus you will “adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,” so that you will “come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end.”³

¹ Hos. xi. 4.

² See Ps. cxvi. 16.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17. Tit. ii. 10. 1 Cor. i. 7, 8.

A PRAYER AFTER CONFIRMATION.

O most merciful Father, I bless thee that I have been permitted, unworthy as I am, to take upon myself the vows made for me at my baptism. Pardon the wanderings of my heart, and the coldness of my prayers when I was confirmed; and let me not lose the promised blessing.

And now, Lord, I am thy servant: grant that I may be thine for ever. Pity the weakness, folly, and ignorance of my youth: save me from the snares of Satan and of the world, and above all, from the wickedness of my own deceitful heart. Teach me more and more my need of Jesus to be my Saviour. Give me faith in him, so that I may know him as "the way, the truth, and the life," and come to him daily for cleansing in his blood, and for strength to love and serve him. Strengthen me, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. May the Bible be my daily guide. Teach me to pray over it, understand it, and love it. Fill me with a holy fear; and so lead and keep me in thy ways, that I may never go back from thee, but through the power of thy grace in Christ Jesus, *may attain everlasting life.*

And now, O Lord, help me to prepare for

giving myself up again to thee at the table of thy dear Son. May I there eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, so that I may remember my Saviour, feed upon him by faith with thanksgiving, and be strengthened and refreshed in my soul.

Lord, teach and help me to repent, believe, and live as becomes thy gospel, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE END.

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